Engaging People, Linking the World –
Broadband Planning Activities Update Report

The Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC), University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and the AIM Institute are cooperatively leading the effort to address the broadband planning needs of Nebraska's communities. The update is focused around the three project areas – Capacity Building, Technical Assistance and Regional Planning.

Capacity Building - *$715,538 Direct; $885,417 Total*
This project will benchmark technology use across relevant community sectors; set goals for improved technology use within each sector; and develop a plan for achieving its goals, with specific recommendations for web-based application development and demand creation. Projects include:

- ***Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: Household Survey*** *UNL*. Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future. *Status*: 6600 Nebraskans surveyed in February 2010 – 47% response rate. Survey results are available at broadband.nebraska.gov. Follow-up survey will be conducted in 2014 that will over sample unserved or underserved populations that were identified in initial survey. Quarter 1 and 2 2013 UNL Research Team reviewed initial survey questions to identify which questions to carry forward for comparison in follow-up survey as well as identifying additional questions to identify changes that have occurred. Plan to have follow-up survey draft completed by Q3.

- ***Business Survey*** *DED.* Businesses will be surveyed through the Business Retention and Expansion process to identify the strengths and challenges they face in utilizing technology. *Status:* Businesses continue to be surveyed using DED's BR&E program. Data has been gathered from over 400 key businesses. Sixteen communities currently hold a licenses to input data in eSynchronist. DED continues to encourage communities to share broadband data in the BR&E program. During Q2 determined to work with Strategic Network Group (SNG) to identify business technology benchmarks statewide.

- ***Inventory of Broadband and Digital Literacy Programs*** *UNL*. In order to identify potential partners and to avoid duplication of efforts, an inventory of broadband and digital literacy programs will be conducted. *Status:* Explore potential new effort to share information through Nebraska Library Commission. Information continues to be updated. During Q2 began to look at the data from the perspective of what can be maintained after the grant.

- ***Focused Surveys*** *UNL*. Focused surveys will be conducted in underserved areas including reservations, North and South Omaha, North Central Nebraska. In addition, limited monies are available to provide analysis of data for communities that wish to look further at their community. *Status:* The focused survey effort will primarily be around business. Identified the Strategic Network Group to conduct a business survey to establish benchmarks. As part of process, up to 500 businesses will receive a scorecard indicating how the business is using technology compared to other businesses in their industry.

- ***Government and Economic Developer Survey*** *UNL*. Surveys will gather information on access, adoption, usage and technical assistance needs of all county and community governments, chambers of commerce and economic developers, and explore technology usage.

Status: Surveys were conducted with the Nebraska Economic Development Association, Nebraska Association of County Officials, and the League of Nebraska Municipalities during Q2 2012.

- **Creating Broadband Plan/Administrative** *UNL.* Regional technology plans as well as a statewide report and recommendations will be created through project. *Status:* Continue to explore ways to draw individuals to the broadband map. During Q3, marketing efforts will highlight the business survey in August, release of the regional plans and a report that highlights changes in broadband availability since the beginning of the grant project.

Technical Assistance - *$1,064,471 Direct; $1,193,068 Total*
The Nebraska Broadband Technical Assistance Program will provide technical assistance on supporting entrepreneurs through technology, and other topics to local governments, chambers of commerce, and economic developers especially in areas with lower than average broadband subscribership. Projects include:

- **Statewide Conference** *AIM Institute.* Conduct Statewide Conference focused on broadband adoption and utilization. *Status.* The agenda is complete and final speaker recruitment is underway for the 2013 conference on October 16-17 in Kearney. Keynote speakers include technology entrepreneur Steve Kiene (Oct. 16 opening keynot), futurist Jack Uldrich (Oct. 16 luncheon keynote) and U.S. Senator Deb Fischer (Oct. 16 closing keynote). Broadband economist Michael Curri will provide a keynote on broadband ROI during the Oct. 17 session, and Larry Strickland from NTIA and Governor Dave Heinman have been invited to provide in-person or video keynotes. Panelists for several breakout sessions highlighting Nebraska success stories have been identified and are being recruited. A youth track is being developed to coincide with the breakout sessions. Students will be included for the keynote addresses by Steve Kiene and Jack Uldrich. Plans for Q3 include completion of speaker recruitment, launch of the online registration site, and marketing/promotion for the conference.
- **Regional Workshops** *UNL.* Regional Workshops will be held to address specific issues related to an area on broadband adoption and utilization. Status: Plans are underway to create workshops that will highlight the planning efforts and challenge participants to think about how broadband can be utilized to enhance their community and business. The format will be similar for all regions and offered at several locations across a region to touch as many participants as possible. Workshops will be held late 2012 or early 2013.
- **Webinars** *UNL.* Up to four webinars will be held each year of the grant to address broadband adoption and utilization. *Status:* Fourteen (14) webinars have been held since 4th quarter 2011. Participation in webinars averaged 50 participants and follow-up viewings have ranged from 21-317. Webinars that have had the most views include a Broadband 101 webinar in 2011. In 1st Quarter 2013, a series entitled "Don't Know What I Don't Know" began and focused on three areas – cloud computing, security and mobile. Webinars are archived at http://broadband.nebraska.gov/events.
- **Best Practice Videos** *UNL/AIM Institute.* At least 20 examples of best practices in expanding broadband adoption across Nebraska will be highlighted. *Status*: 37 videos have now been launched through the broadband efforts. Views have ranged from a low of 5 to 169. Best practice videos have highlighted the benefits of broadband technology. Videos are archived

at http://broadband.nebraska.gov/videos or visit the Youtube channel has been created to host the videos - Http://Youtube.com/broadbandnebraska.

- **Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EAS)** *DED*. An entrepreneurial mentoring program will focus on the human capital of the founders and their core teams that includes addressing how broadband can help strengthen entrepreneurs in the state. *Status*: The broadband component of this activity is complete.

- **Technical Assistance Expertise** *UNL/Steering Team*. The focus of this effort will be to provide technical assistance in the area of business and entrepreneurism to chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local and county stakeholders statewide and regionally to increase broadband adoption. *Status:* Technical assistance expertise will be conducted as needs are identified. The surveys, focused conversations and planning efforts have consistently shown that many businesses in the State of Nebraska do not understand how technology and broadband can be used to enhance their bottom line. Over the past six months, the planning team has explored various ways to show businesses the return on investment (ROI) in using broadband. During Q2, the broadband planning initiative partnered with the Strategic Network Group (SNG) on an approach to connect with businesses, build capacity within the state to work with businesses and to measure change/impact. The process will begin with a survey being conducted with businesses beginning in August 2013.

- **Broadband Portal Development** *UNL*. Develop a central broadband portal which will serve as a source of information on broadband efforts in Nebraska. *Status*: Website officially launched in April 2012. Since that time we have had 10,546 visits and 6,948 unique visitors with an average visit of 3:34. During the last quarter April through June, there were 1,920 visits and visits and 1,499 unique visits with 1,425 being new visitors and 494 returning. The average visit was 2:45.

Local and Regional Planning - *$318,049 Direct; $394,177 Total Budget*
The Nebraska Broadband Local/Regional Technology Planning Teams program will augment regional planning approaches identified in the initial grant application with community planning, business and entrepreneurial discussions, government discussions, and agricultural discussions. Activities include:

- **Regional Planning Teams** *UNL*. Regional planning teams will be formed to create the regional plans. *Status:* The initial drafts of the regional plans were completed late May 2013. A summary report of the regional plans highlights the priorities of each region. The North Central Regional plan was finalized during Q2. All plans will be completed early Q3. Next steps will be to gather feedback on the plans and engage more people in conversation. The documents are designed to be fluid as feedback and additional partners are identified. The summary report and North Central Regional Plan are attached for reference.

- Focus groups/focused conversations continued during Q2. Four focus groups were held in the Western Region. As in other regions of the state, availability of broadband is not equal in the communities. Those living outside the city limits expressed challenges of caps with service, cost and reliability. The focus groups also revealed the digital literacy challenge with government entities in moving to more services to on-line. The Department of Revenue has needed to adjust deadlines in sales tax filings primarily due to skill level of businesses unable to enter the necessary data.

- **Community Planning – North and South Omaha** *UNL/AIM Institute in North and South Omaha.* North and South Omaha were identified as underserved regions/areas through the survey of Nebraska households. *Status:* Draft strategic plan has been completed. Plans for Q3 are to have the draft reviewed by project partners with a final plan to be completed by the end of Q3. See priority summary report for details.

- **Community Planning - Cultural and Unserved Communities** *UNL.* Additional community or local planning teams in regions/areas identified as underserved through the survey of Nebraska households and broadband mapping data. *Status:* During Q4, the Nebraska Indian Community College launched its radio station. During Q2, planning was underway to move the station internet. Draft plan is completed and included in the priority summary document.

- **Focus Groups** *UNL.* Seven to 10 focus groups will be held with anchor institutions and utility providers as well as populations with low usage rates. *Status:* Plans are underway to conduct focus groups in the Sandhills/central part of Nebraska during Q3. This is an area that is primarily rural. The focus groups will be designed to receive feedback on the regional plans and to gather additional input.

- **Community Sector Discussions** *UNL.* Community sector discussions will be held to further advance adoption of technology in specific industries such as business and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, agriculture and the health industry. The focus of each discussion will be to benchmark technology use across the specific sectors, set goals for improved technology, and develop a plan to achieve goals. *Status:* The community sector discussions will begin in 2012 and conducted by UNL. Agriculture and health are two community sector groups that have been identified. Conversations will be held during Q3/Q4 2013. Additional community sector conversations may be held as we continue to receive input on the regional plans.

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